

One specimen. Probably the *female* of a new species, the male being yet unknown.

5. MYIOLESTES VITIENSIS.

Supra obscure rufo-fuscus, subtus sordide grisescens, lateribus dorsi colore adumbratis; subalaribus grisescentibus, subcaudalibus subrufescentibus; rectricibus nigro-fuscis, binis lateralibus macula apicali conspicue alba pogonio interno notatis; rostro plumbeo, tomis et mandibulæ basi albidis; pedibus plumbeis. Long. tot.  $6\frac{1}{2}''$ , rostri  $2\frac{1}{2}'''$ , alæ  $3'' 1'''$ , caudæ  $2'' 5'''$ , tarsi  $8\frac{2}{3}'''$ .

*Hab.* Ovalau.

One specimen. Typical of the genus. A nearly allied African form is *Alethe*.

All these birds were collected by Dr. Gräffe, the able collector of Mr. Cæsar Godeffroy at Hamburg, in whose private museum they are now to be seen\*.

XVII.—Notes on the Ornithology of Spain.

By LORD LILFORD, F.L.S., F.Z.S., &c.

HAVING revisited Spain last spring, as I before stated was my intention (*Ibis*, 1865, pp. 166–177), I am inclined to think that some further observations on the birds of that country may not be altogether devoid of interest to some of the readers of 'The Ibis.' I was unfortunately prevented by illness from carrying out my schemes of exploring the lower valley of the Guadalquivir and the wilds of the province of Estremadura, which, I believe, are the richest districts of Spain, from an ornithological point of view, both as regards number and comparative rarity of species; but, taking into consideration that my researches were confined entirely to the Castiles, I think that I am justified in saying that I met with fair success; and although I did not discover any new species, I made myself intimately acquainted with the habits of several birds of which very little has, as far as I know, been hitherto recorded.

I was very fortunate in securing, through the kindness of MM. Verreaux in Paris, the services of a first-rate preserver, M.

\* [*Cf.* *Ibis*, 1864, p. 232.—ED.]

Louis Michel, who had been for four years in their employment, and to whom I am indebted for the excellent condition of my specimens, and for very agreeable companionship during my stay in Spain. We arrived in Madrid, by way of Paris and Irun, on the 3rd of April 1865, and I at once set about trying to obtain permission to explore the *Sitios Reales*, or royal preserves. I found considerable difficulty in making my Spanish friends understand or believe that I only wished to shoot birds for preservation, and not to kill game; and in spite of the great kindness of Her Majesty's minister, Sir John Crampton, and Señor Banuelos, of the Spanish Foreign Office, I did not receive the required authority till April 15th. In the mean time, I had ransacked the very scanty stores of the only two professional bird-stuffers in Madrid, Señor M. Sanches, of the museum in the Calle de Alcala, and Señor Severini, in the Carretera de San Geronimo; but although they both had a good many specimens, some of which were of considerable interest, most of them were in such an extremely bad state of preservation as to be worthless. I, however, managed to pick out fair specimens of *Aquila heliaca*, *Bubo maximus*, *Oxylophus glandarius*, *Cyanopica cooki*, and *Pterocles arenarius*, besides a few eggs. In the markets I met with nothing of great interest, but procured some fine specimens of *Otis tetrax* in full breeding-plumage.

I had been told by several persons that in the grounds of the Casa de Campo, a small country-house belonging to the Queen, to the south-west of Madrid, a good many birds of different sorts were to be met with; and I was particularly recommended to apply to the King's head-chasseur (who lived in these grounds) for information and assistance in everything relating to beasts and birds. Accordingly, on the 8th of April, I sallied out by the Puerta de San Miguel, and, crossing the Manzanares by the Puente de Toledo, soon found myself at the gates of the royal demesne. On inquiry at the porter's lodge I found that Manuel de la Torr , the chasseur above mentioned, was away on a shooting-expedition, but was expected back every day. I roamed about for some hours amongst the groves and alleys of the Casa de Campo, and was much interested by the birds I saw. The beautiful Spanish Magpie, *Cyanopica cooki*, was very abun-



dant, and, by concealing myself and squeaking after the fashion pursued by British gamekeepers for the destruction of stoats, weasels, and the like, I soon gathered twenty or thirty of these inquisitive and lively birds within a few yards of me. I had previously made acquaintance with them in Andalucia, but had not had time or opportunity to watch them closely as I did upon the present occasion. Their notes are very varied, at one time reminding one of the chatter of a flock of Starlings; now and again a Jay-like screech is to be heard, and sometimes a harsh chatter, somewhat like the alarm-note of the Mistletoe-Thrush. The flight and actions of these birds resemble those of the common Magpie, *Pica caudata*, but they are much less shy. I was assured that they did not breed till May; nor indeed did I expect to find them nesting, as, on May 1st, 1864, one only out of some twenty new nests which I found in the neighbourhood of Cordova contained eggs. The Spanish Magpie is a very local species; the principal facts I have been able to discover as to its distribution are as follows:—It is extremely abundant in the immediate neighbourhood of Madrid, and particularly affects the woods of evergreen oak. It is found more or less commonly throughout New Castile, La Mancha, Estremadura, the province of Leon south of Salamanca, and the portion of Andalusia to the north of the great southern Sierras. In the Sierra Morena it is found in myriads, and does considerable damage in the olive-yards and corn-fields. North of the Guadarrama mountains in Old Castile it is comparatively scarce, and, as far as I could learn, is unknown in Catalonia, and extremely rare in Valencia and Murcia. In Portugal, I understand that it is common in the neighbourhood of Lisbon (*Cf. Ibis*, 1865, p. 337), but, never having visited that country, I can only speak from hearsay on the subject. In Andalucia and Estremadura this bird is known as "*Mohino*," in New Castile as "*Rabilargo*," and in Leon as "*Ruipego*."

Whilst watching the Spanish Magpies, I heard at a short distance a cry which I at once concluded to be that of the common Buzzard, *Buteo vulgaris*. I advanced quietly through some thick undercover, and still heard the cry repeated, apparently close to me; but the trees stood thickly together, and I could not

for a considerable time discover the bird from which it came. I, expecting to see the Buzzard circling in the air above my head, did not examine the trees closely, until at length I was certain that the bird was in a thick ilex within a few yards, and at length discovered that my Buzzard was nothing but a Jay. I never heard this imitation of the Buzzard in any country except Spain; but there it is one of the most frequent of the Jay's many notes, and so exact a copy as at first to deceive the most experienced ears. The Jay, *Garrulus glandarius* (in Spanish "*Arrendajo*"), appears to be common in most parts of Spain. During my ramble on this occasion in the grounds of the Casa de Campo, I suddenly came face to face with a Scops-Owl, *Scops giu*, which was sitting tightly drawn up against the trunk of an elm about five feet from the ground. We contemplated each other, no doubt with mutual admiration, for some minutes, till the Owl, after bowing politely several times, retired to a thick ilex at some distance, where I left him. This species was then beginning to make its appearance in Castile; a fortnight later it was very abundant, and its melancholy call, "keeyou," "keeyou," to be heard throughout the night, and often during the day, in all parts of the country.

The common Green Woodpecker, *Gecinus viridis*, is very abundant about the Casa de Campo; and on this occasion I also noticed one pair of the Grey-headed Green Woodpecker, *Gecinus canus*, which is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, by no means common in Spain. I certainly never again recognized it during my stay in the Castiles. The Green Woodpecker is known in Spain by the name of "*Pito real*," and appears to be generally distributed throughout the country. The Hoopoe, *Upupa epops* (in Spanish "*Abubilla*"), was just arriving from its winter-quarters in the south, and to be seen in pairs strutting about the sandy paths in the upper part of these grounds. I noticed a few of our British Pied Flycatchers, *Muscicapa atricapilla*, and great numbers of Goldfinches, *Carduelis elegans*, and Serins, *Serinus hortulanus*. Red-legged Partridges, *Caccabis rufa*, constantly rose before me in pairs, and their cackling call-note resounded on all sides, while great numbers of Woodpigeons haunted the ilex-groves. These last birds were still in flocks,



without, apparently, any present intention of nesting. The Great and Blue Titmice, *Parus major* and *P. cæruleus*, were very abundant; and I noticed on this occasion, besides the species above mentioned, *Hirundo rustica*, *Sylvia atricapilla*, *Ruticilla phænicura*, *Erythacus rubecula*, *Philomela lusciniæ*, *Accentor modularis*, *Turdus iliacus*, *Turdus musicus*, *Turdus merula*, *Sturnus unicolor*, *Alauda cristata*, *Fringilla cælebs*, *Passer domesticus*, *Gallinula chloropus*, and *Podiceps minor*.

On my return to Madrid I found that a man had brought to our hotel a Common Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus*, alive for me: this bird was in the barred plumage of the first year, in fact precisely similar, to all appearance, to a nestling; but at this time of year it was impossible that this should be the case. Its owner insisted that it was no relation whatever to the Common Cuckoo. I do not remember to have ever before seen a bird of this species in this plumage at this time of year, and imagined that it assumed the grey adult plumage at the first moult; but I find that in Spain the country people all affirm that the *red* Cuckoos are to be seen at all times of the year between April and September, and consider them entirely distinct from the Common Cuckoo. This perhaps does not go for much; but I mention it as I had never before heard of the idea, and I should be glad to know whether any of my readers can throw any light on the subject.

On the next day, April 9th, I was again down early at the Casa de Campo, and, on this occasion, found that Manuel de la Torre had just returned. I made acquaintance with him, and found in him a man very much to my mind, well acquainted with all the birds of the country, evidently a keen observer, and full of information on local zoology. The chief facts I gathered from him were, that the Booted Eagle, *Aquila pennata*, about which I particularly inquired, does not arrive in Spain till the end of April, and that the Great Spotted Cuckoo, *Oxylophus glandarius*, was then due, and lays its eggs in the nests of the Common Magpie, *Pica caudata*, very soon after its appearance in country. We wandered about the southern boundary of the grounds of the Casa de Campo, where I had the pleasure of observing for a considerable time the actions of two pairs of the

aforesaid Spotted Cuckoo. I had before had a passing glimpse of this bird in Murcia in 1856, and again in Andalusia in 1864; but I fancy, from subsequent observation, that it is much more common in Central than in Southern Spain. On the present occasion, my attention was at first attracted by a shrill chatter, quite unlike the note of any bird with which I was acquainted; and on approaching the spot whence it proceeded, I descried four long-tailed birds hopping about an open space some sixty yards from me, and occasionally flying up into the surrounding trees. As far as I could make out, they were engaged in catching and devouring grasshoppers, now and then diversifying this pursuit by a little love-making and a great deal of altercation. Their actions on the ground are very awkward and grotesque; but the flight is rather swift and well-sustained, somewhat resembling that of the Common Cuckoo. They were rather shy, and, on my showing myself, at once flew off into the high trees, where I heard them for a long time pluming one another, and keeping up an almost incessant chatter.

The following day I went down again to the Casa de Campo, and persuaded Manuel to accompany me with his gun. We again saw the Spotted Cuckoo, but he did not succeed in bagging one; he shot a Spanish Magpie, a Hoopoe, a Scops Owl, and two specimens of *Phyllopneuste bonellii* for me, besides which we saw, in addition to the species already enumerated, *Lanius rufus*, *Alcedo ispida*, *Turdus viscivorus*, and *Coccothraustes vulgaris*. In the Madrid market I observed Pintailed Sand-Grouse, *Pterocles setarius*, Woodcocks, *Scolopax rusticola*, Golden Plovers, *Charadrius pluvialis*, and Stone Curlews, *Ædicnemus crepitans*.

On my next visit to the Casa de Campo I noticed a pair of *Tinnunculus cenchris* and *Merops apiaster*, just arrived from their winter quarters. Manuel shot a Great Spotted Cuckoo and several other birds for me, including four fine specimens of *Anthus campestris*, which appears to be common in Castile during the summer months, and a specimen of *Potamodus cettii*, which is abundant, but, from its habit of frequenting the thickest brambles along the watercourses, and its extreme reluctance to take wing, very difficult to secure. The Common Cuckoo was



in full song, and I heard many Wrynecks, *Jynx torquilla*. We obtained two eggs of *Oxylophus glandarius* from a nest of the Common Magpie, in a high oak, and these were the only eggs in the nest.

At length, on April 15th, I received the long-hoped-for permission to visit the *Sitios Reales* with a gun, and at the same time leave for Manuel to accompany me in my expedition. After one or two more visits to the Casa de Campo, on which occasions I added several Spotted Cuckoos, Spanish Magpies, and a few other species to my collection, we made an expedition to El Pardo, a crown-property at about seven miles from Madrid, consisting of a small village, a palace, and barracks, with an enclosed park some eighteen leagues in circumference. This park is in some places thickly wooded with ilex, cork, and the like, and is full of game of different kinds—deer, wild boars, rabbits, and partridges. In the winter, Woodcocks are said to be very abundant in the dense jungle of bramble, thorn, and tamarisk on the banks of the Manzanares, which, rising in the Sierra de Guadarrama, runs from north-west to south-east through the whole extent of this domain. Here we stayed for two days, but were prevented by continued rain from doing much. We spent hours in pursuit of *Potamodus cettii*, but only succeeded in securing two specimens of this provoking but charming warbler. The song somewhat resembles that of a Nightingale, but is louder and more thrilling, and generally ends abruptly just when one expects the best part of the performance to follow. We searched in vain for the nest of this species. Three or four Vultures were almost always in sight. Bee-eaters were arriving in myriads, and skimming over the country in every direction, high and low; and Spanish Magpies were shrieking and chattering from almost every clump of trees. We recognized a fine Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaëtus*, winging his way towards the mountains. Both species of Kite, *Milvus ictinus* and *M. migrans*, soared about the village on the look-out for an unwary chicken; and as evening came on, the cries of three species of Owl, *Strix flammea*, *Athene noctua*, and *Scops giu*, helped to make night hideous or beautiful, according to the fancy of the hearer. These three species are common, and the

two former, I think, resident in all parts of Spain. *Bubo maximus* is not rare in the mountains, and *Asio otus*, *A. brachyotus*, and *Syrnium aluco* are well known, though I did not obtain specimens of any but the four first-named species. The Eagle-Owl is known as "*Buho grande*;" the Long-eared, Short-eared, and Tawny Owls indiscriminately as "*Carabo*;" the Barn-Owl is called "*Lechuza*;" the Little Owl "*Mochuelo*;" and the Scops "*Corneja*." I was informed by Señor Graells that he has met with *Bubo ascalaphus* in the province of Catalonia.

We returned to Madrid on the 20th of April in pouring rain, which continued almost without intermission till the 24th, on which day I went down again to the Casa de Campo and shot several birds. The Warblers were arriving in great numbers, and we obtained specimens of *Sylvia orphea*, *Calamodyta arundinacea*, *C. phragmitis*, besides some Pied Flycatchers, *Muscicapa atricapilla*, a Tree-Pipit, *Anthus arboreus*, Scops Owls, Bee-eaters, Woodchats, *Lanius rufus*, and Spanish Magpies. On this occasion I first met with the Red-necked Nightjar, *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, but had not the luck to get a shot at him, as I had just killed a Warbler, and was struggling through the thick brambles to pick it up, when the Nightjar rose at my feet, and was out of sight before I could get my gun to my shoulder. The difference in size and the general lighter colour of the plumage at once distinguish this species from the Common Nightjar, *C. europæus*, which, as far as I have observed, is not very common in Spain. I was much struck by the enormous number of Swifts, *Cypselus apus*, which had arrived since my last visit to the Casa de Campo, and were now, with the Bee-eaters, by far the most prominent species about Madrid. The beautiful Lesser Kestrels, *Tinnunculus cenchris*, had also received strong reinforcements, and, with their congener *T. alaudarius*, now occupied every coigne of vantage in the town, particularly affecting the roof of the Queen's palace, where they appear to live amicably in company with great numbers of House-Pigeons and Starlings, *Sturnus unicolor*. Manuel informed me that a Peregrine Falcon generally took up its abode on the palace-roof in winter, and committed great havoc amongst the Pigeons. I found a specimen of this Falcon at the bird-stuffer's, Severini; but I am still



of opinion that the common Falcon of the southern provinces is *Falco barbarus*.

We left Madrid for Aranjuez on the evening of the 24th April, by the Great Southern Railway, and took up our quarters at the Fonda de los Ynfantes, which hostelry I can safely recommend to any one visiting this summer retreat of Spanish royalty. On the following morning, after having paid a visit to the "Administrador," *i. e.* manager of the royal domain, for the purpose of obtaining his *visa* to my shooting-licence, we sallied out to commence our bird-nesting campaign. Aranjuez is a small village situated in the valley of the Tagus, near the confluence of the Jarama with that river, the country around it being, from the abundance of water and consequent fertility of its soil, the principal market-garden of the sun-scorched and wind-blown capital. Magnificent avenues of elm, plane, and oak extend along the roads in all directions; and the green meadows and groves of deciduous trees of the royal *patrimonio*, as it is termed, form a most agreeable contrast to the sombre olive-yards and the almost unvarying arid and tawny plains so characteristic of the central provinces of Spain; in fact the crown-property of Aranjuez may with justice be called an oasis in the desert; and though its sanitary reputation is not high during the summer months, it is the favoured abode of the Queen and Court, till the heats of July drive them to the pine-forests and snows of San Ildefonso. The *patrimonio* is of great extent, and is one of the most valuable of the many private estates of the Spanish crown. Of course, in such a thirsty country as Spain, we may take it for granted that where there is water there will be birds; and Manuel had given me glowing accounts of the great number and variety of birds of prey which breed here, and the abundance of wildfowl, Woodcocks, and Snipes to be met with during the winter in the *sotos*, or low-lying plains. We crossed the Tagus by a bridge just above the palace-gardens; and, stopping awhile to look at the camels which are used to carry gravel, weeds, and the like to and from the gardens, we strolled along under a glorious overarching avenue of planes and oaks on the Madrid road, and investigated many a likely-looking hole for nests, without suc-

cess, as the Hoopoes, Green Woodpeckers, and Titmice, of which we saw great numbers, had not apparently yet begun to lay. Great numbers of the Spanish Sparrows, *Passer salicicolus*, were building in the plane trees; and Woodchats, Pied Flycatchers, Goldfinches, Serins, and Nightingales in profusion enlivened the roadsides. Not even in Epirus have I heard so many of this last species; and I was glad to hear that the "*Ruiseñor*," as the Spaniards call this delightful bird, is protected by special order of Her Catholic Majesty, who is repaid by a nightly serenade immediately under her palace-windows, such as not even the most skilled of her music-loving subjects can give her. We procured some more specimens of the little Scops Owl, and heard the fine clear note of the Golden Oriole, *Oriolus galbula* (in Spanish "*Oropéndola*"), which was then beginning to arrive in the country. A man at work in a field informed us that there was a nest of "*Milano*," *Milvus ictinus*, in a lofty stone-pine at some distance from the spot where we met him; and sure enough, on approaching the tree he pointed out, we could descry the nest and the tail of the Kite projecting therefrom. Manuel was anxious to secure the bird, as he received a reward of sixteen rials, between three and four shillings, for every *animal dañino* (noxious animal) which he brought in to the Administrador. We accordingly approached the tree, cautiously, from opposite directions, and I killed the bird as she slipped quietly off the nest on my side. The nest was nearly at the top of the tree, which shot up without a branch for at least seventy feet, and was far too bulky to admit of "swarming." Two urchins, who had watched our proceedings, declared that there was only one man in Aranjuez who could get to the nest, and that their father was that man. We accordingly despatched them to fetch him, and in the mean time shot many specimens of *Passer salicicolus*, of which bird great numbers were nesting in the thick branches of the pine over our heads, and some actually in the foundation of the Kite's nest itself. A bird, which I at once identified as a Short-toed Eagle, *Circaëtus gallicus*, sailed by, but out of shot, and the male Kite kept soaring in circles far above us. In a very short time the boys returned with their father, a fine specimen of the Castilian



peasant, a tall, gaunt man of about fifty, simple-minded, and civil, as are the generality of his fellows. I mention him thus particularly, as I was so struck by his performance as a climber on this occasion that I retained him in that capacity during the remainder of my stay in Spain. He had come provided with a rope, one end of which, after a few ineffectual attempts, he managed to swing over the lowest bough of the tree in which the nest was, and in a few minutes was hauling himself up, hand over hand, after the fashion of a monkey. The nest contained two young birds, just hatched, and two rotten eggs. So much for our first day's nesting. On our way home we shot a fine pair of Little Spotted Woodpeckers, *Picus minor*, which I had not previously observed in Spain.

During the next few days we made excursions in different directions about Aranjuez, and obtained several more nests of *Milvus iclinus*, and added many species to my Spanish collection. On one occasion, Agapo, our climber, having ascended to a likely-looking hole in a white poplar, after hacking for some time with his bill-hook, declared that he could hear a sound inside which could only proceed from "*demonitos*" (little devils); and after some stirring up with a stick, out flew the imps of darkness in the shape of some twenty or thirty large red bats, of which we shot seven. We procured several nests of *Sturnus unicolor*, *Serinus hortulorum*, and other common birds.

On the 29th, at Sotomayor, on the Tagus, a few miles above Aranjuez, we found three nests of the Common Magpie, all containing eggs of the Spotted Cuckoo, which is extremely common in this locality. In one nest were eight eggs of the Magpie and three of the Cuckoo; in another, one Magpie's and three Cuckoo's; and in the third, two of each species. In almost every instance the eggs of the Cuckoo had been longer incubated than those of the Magpie. A perpetual skirmish goes on between these two species, the Magpies pursuing the Cuckoos with loud outcries, but condescending, nevertheless, to rear the young of the interloper to the detriment of their own families, as I was assured, and, from my own later observations, am inclined to believe, that the young Cuckoos forcibly eject the

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infant Magpies from the nest by force after the latter are hatched.

380 In a range of cliffs overlooking the plain of Sotomayor, Manuel had expected to find a nest of Bonelli's Eagle, *Aquila bonellii*; but although we several times saw this species in the neighbourhood, we could not ascertain that they had bred there this season, the nest that he had known of in previous years having been appropriated by a pair of Egyptian Vultures, *Neophron percnopterus*. In the plains below I found the Little Ringed Plover, *Ægialites minor*, in pairs, frequenting the mule-tracks, and apparently not caring about the shingle-beds and sand-banks of the Tagus close at hand, where I once or twice noticed the Kentish Plover, *Ægialites cantianus*. We shot our first specimen of the Red-necked Nightjar, *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, at the foot of the cliffs, and obtained several more specimens of *Potamodus cettii*, *Merops apiaster*, *Alauda cristata*, *Oxylophus glandarius*, and the like. Quails, *Coturnix communis*, were arriving in great numbers, and calling in every direction; and the clear notes of the Golden Oriole resounded from the oaks. In the valley Manuel shot a fine fox amongst the rocks, which he left as bait to attract Vultures. In many instances, we found that eggs and young of hole-breeding birds—Hoopoes, Woodpeckers, Starlings, and the like—had been devoured by the lizards (*Lacerta ocellata*), with which the country swarms, and in one case we disturbed a large lizard in the act of devouring the parent Hoopoe on her nest. The keepers assured me that these reptiles destroy an immense number of young rabbits, and will finish a whole sitting of Partridge's eggs at a meal. My dog, a Norfolk retriever, was completely puzzled by these lizards, and on being told to fetch one would sit on his haunches and whine, not knowing what line to take with the gaping, wriggling animal before him, so different to anything he had seen during the course of his orthodox British education.

On May 3rd we took upwards of twenty eggs of the Spotted Cuckoo from various Magpies' nests in the trees along the road leading to the Puente Largo, a bridge over the Jarama, some three miles from Aranjuez, in one case finding eight Cuckoo's eggs, with five of those of the rightful owner, in one nest. I



shot on this day a beautiful specimen of *Sylvia conspicillata*, which frequents the low aromatic shrubs in the dry parts of the country, apparently preferring the districts in which there is a dense growth of thyme. In a marshy elbow of the river, overgrown with reeds, we flushed a Little Bittern, *Ardetta minuta*; but I did not get a shot, and I could not make him rise a second time. In the reeds the Thrush Warbler, *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, was very abundant, and kept up an incessant chattering, very much like the conversation of a party of frogs, with occasional snatches of song resembling that of the Reed-Warbler, *Calamodyta arundinacea*. We saw a pair of Marsh-Harriers, *Circus aeruginosus*, but did not succeed in finding their nest. Four species of Lark—*Alauda arvensis*, *A. cristata*, *A. brachydactyla*, and *A. calandra*—abound in this district; but I think that the Bee-eater maintained a numerical superiority over every other species. In a damp grove of poplars by the river I shot five beautiful specimens of the Red-necked Nightjar, but could not succeed in finding the eggs. I imagine they had only just arrived. On the hills near Aranjuez we procured three species of Wheatear—*Saxicola cachinnans*, *S. stapazina*, and *S. aurita*; the second is by far the most common of the three.

Having heard of a Kite's nest in the Queen's gardens, on May 1st we went to look for it, and found it in the top of a magnificent elm close to the palace. Manuel shot the bird, which turned out to be a fine specimen of the Black Kite, *Milvus migrans*, the first we had procured. Before sending our climber up, we went on to examine another nest, of which we had been told, in a high plane tree in another part of the gardens. After some trouble we found it, and shouted in vain for some time to make the bird leave it. Up went the trusty Agapo; but the bird sat close till he was within a yard or two of the nest, when she dashed off, plainly disclosing to us the fact that she was not a Kite. Manuel was badly placed for a shot, and, though he fired, did not succeed in killing her. On reaching the nest, Agapo declared that the two eggs which it contained were white and unspotted. Manuel shouted to him to know if the boughs in the interior of the nest had green leaves on them, and, on his replying in the affirmative, declared that it was a nest of the Booted Eagle, *Aquila pennata*. Agapo

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brought down the eggs, which were certainly unlike those of any Kite that I had ever seen. Manuel assured me that he had no doubt whatever as to their being the eggs of *A. pennata*; but to make sure, we waited quietly for the return of the parent bird. She did not keep us long in suspense; but, after soaring far out of shot for some minutes, enabling us fully to identify her species, she dropped perpendicularly on to her empty nest, rendering it impossible to obtain a shot. The nest indeed was quite as far as Manuel's gun would carry; and though on the Eagle leaving it a second time he fired and declared that she was a dead bird, I must confess that I believe, for all the harm he did to her, she may be, whilst I write, preparing for another attempt at establishing her family in New Castile. The Black Kite's nest contained three eggs, and in its foundations were three nests of the Spanish Sparrow. I may here mention that in almost every nest of the two species of Kite, *Milvus ictinus* and *M. migrans*, which we found in Spain, were one or more nests of this Sparrow, besides, in most instances, a large colony in the immediate vicinity. We found several nests of the Serin, *Serinus hortulanus*, in the clipped hedges, the odoriferous establishment of a Hoopoe in a hollow elm, and nests of the Common Wren, *Troglodytes parvulus*, Blackbird, and Nightingale in various parts of the garden. Whilst sitting with some of the gardeners discussing our exploits over a cigarette, a very large flock of Bonelli's Eagle passed over to the southwards high in air; there was no possibility of mistaking the species, the very peculiar shape of the tail, which I have before noticed\*, and the tawny-red breasts of the immature birds at once serving to distinguish them. Manuel told me that he had several times previously seen large flights of this species high in air as if on migration; but as this Eagle is well known as a permanent resident in Spain, it is difficult to account for these large assemblages, more particularly at this season of the year. With one exception, I never before saw such a congregation of raptorial birds, and should be glad to know if such an occurrence has come under the observation of any of my readers.

On the following day we went out to a small lake on the road to Ocaña, known as El Mar de Aranjuez. In the tamarisk-

\* Ibis, 1860, p. 5.





thickets at one end of the lake we found great numbers of the Melodious Willow-Warbler, *Hypolais salicaria*, of which species we obtained many specimens; we also shot a Little Bittern, and saw many White- and Grey-headed Wagtails, *Motacilla alba* and *Budytes flava*, Sandpipers, *Actitis hypoleuca*, and several pairs of Eared Grebes, *Podiceps nigricollis*. Of this last species we obtained two nests with their full complement of eggs, but we did not succeed in shooting one of the parent birds. A few Wild Ducks, *Anas boschas*, were breeding in the rushes at the lower end of the pool; and in a range of low cliffs at a short distance we descried several nests of the Common Kestrel, and one of the Raven, *Corvus corax*; but we had no ropes with us, and without them a siege was impossible. The Raven is very common throughout Spain: in a nest of this bird which we took was one egg of *Oxylophus glandarius*, with five of the proprietor's. This nest was in a high pine tree about a mile from Aranjuez. In the afternoon of the day above mentioned, I rode out to a spot on the other side of the village to which the carcasses of the horses which die in the royal *haras* are dragged and left to rot in the sun; here we found a great concourse of carrion-eating birds, consisting of perhaps some twenty or more of the Cinereous Vulture, *Vultur monachus*, a pair or two of Griffons, *Gyps fulvus*, a sprinkling of Egyptian Vultures, many Kites of both species, and a great number of Ravens. I made a long detour to attempt stalking one of the first-named birds, which I was anxious to obtain, but in vain; the ground would not admit of concealment, and the Ravens acting as sentries effectually prevented my success. I here observed, amongst many tracks of cats, foxes, badgers, polecats, and other predatory animals, the footprints of the Genet (*Viverra genetta*), which is tolerably abundant in Central and Southern Spain.

Here I must leave off for the present, hoping to have another opportunity of recording my further doings in Spanish ornithology, and expressing my wish that some far more competent naturalist than myself may go out and prosper in Spain. Would that I could accompany him!

March 1866.

[To be continued.] 377